In 1995, Georgia’s Pre-K Program became the first in the nation to provide a universally available preschool education program for 4-year-old children. Although established in 1993, the program was not universally available until two years later. Georgia’s Pre-K Program is offered through a variety of settings including Head Start agencies, private child care centers, public schools, faith-based organizations, military facilities, and state colleges and universities. Funding is provided by proceeds from the state lottery. Individual programs receive funds based on teacher credentials, the number of students enrolled, and the metropolitan or non-metropolitan program zone.

Regardless of setting, all of Georgia’s Pre-K classrooms must follow the Bright from the Start Pre-K Operating Guidelines and use Georgia’s Pre-K Content Standards to guide instruction. These pre-K standards are aligned with the Georgia Early Learning Standards for birth through age 3 and the Georgia Performance Standards for kindergarten. On-site program monitoring assures adherence to the quality standards.

The Georgia Pre-K Child Assessment Program, based on the Work Sampling System, was implemented during the 2006-2007 school year. Preschool teachers received training on using this assessment to individualize instruction and to document children’s progress. In addition, teachers inform parents of their child’s progress through two progress reports per year that are linked to this assessment program. In the 2008-2009 program year, an online version of the Child Assessment Program was piloted, with the goal of facilitating better connections between pre-K and the K–16 system.

Effective in the 2008-2009 program year, assistant teachers are required to have a minimum of a CDA. The state will begin piloting Georgia’s Pre-K Program model to incorporate instruction in English, Mandarin, and Spanish during the 2009-2010 program year.
GEORGIA PRE-K PROGRAM

ACCESS

Total state program enrollment ................................................. 78,310
School districts that offer state program ................................. 100% (counties)
Income requirement .............................................................. None
Hours of operation ................................................................. 6.5 hours/day, 5 days/week
Operating schedule ............................................................... Academic year
Special education enrollment ............................................... 8,324
Federally funded Head Start enrollment ................................. 21,937
State-funded Head Start enrollment ...................................... 0

State spending per child enrolled ........................................... $4,234
All reported spending per child enrolled* ............................... $4,239

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY | STATE PRE-K REQUIREMENT | BENCHMARK | DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?
--- | --- | --- | ---
Early learning standards .................................................. Comprehensive | Comprehensive | ✔
Teacher degree ......................................................... AA or Montessori diploma | BA | ☐
Teacher specialized ............................................. Degree and certification in ECE | Specializing in pre-K training or meet Montessori requirements | ☐
Assistant teacher degree ........................................ CDA | CDA or equivalent | ☐
Teacher in-service ....................................................... 15 clock hours | At least 15 hours/year | ✔
Maximum class size ......................................................... 20 or lower
3-year-olds ................................................................. NA | 20 | ✔
4-year-olds ................................................................. NA
Staff-child ratio .............................................................. 1:10 or better
3-year-olds ................................................................. NA | 1:10 | ✔
4-year-olds ................................................................. 1:10
Screening/referral ......................................................... Vision, hearing, dental; | Vision, hearing, health; and at least 1 support service | ☐
and support services | and support services | ✔
Meals ................................................................. Lunch | At least 1/day | ✔
Monitoring ................................................................. Site visits and other monitoring | Site visits | ✔

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending ................................................ $331,542,255
Local match required? ....................................................... No
State spending per child enrolled ...................................... $4,234
All reported spending per child enrolled* ......................... $4,239

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

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* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.
** K–12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures.
Data are for the ’08–’09 school year, unless otherwise noted.

1 Although it is not a policy requirement, 82 percent of all lead teachers in Georgia’s Pre-K classrooms have a minimum of a BA and 63 percent of teachers with a BA or higher are EE certified.
2 As of the 2008-2009 program year, the minimum requirement for assistant teachers is a CDA.
3 Georgia’s Pre-K Program only requires vision, hearing, and dental screenings and referrals. Head Start/Pre-K blended programs require these screenings in addition to health and developmental screenings. Based on further clarification, this policy does not meet NIEER’s requirement. Support services include two annual parent conferences or home visits, parent involvement activities, transition to kindergarten activities, and other locally determined support services.